English 1000: Project 2 Sample Research Notes

**Sample Exibit A: Personal Interview Source**

**Source Information:**

Smith, Julie. Personal interview. 9 February 2011.

**Summary of Source:**

Julie Smith is a kindergarten teacher at Prairie Ridge Elementary School. I chose to interview Ms. Smith because I wanted to learn more about children’s books from the perspective of a teacher. I decided Ms. Smith would be a good source because she teaches reading to children aged 4-6. The genre I am researching in this project is “The Magic School Bus” series of children’s books. This series is targeted to children who are aged 4-6 as well as those children’s parents, care providers, and teachers. Therefore, Ms. Smith works directly with “The Magic School Bus” books’ target audience on a regular basis. She should be knowledgeable about these books and about these books’ audience.

**Interesting quotes/facts:**

When I asked Ms. Smith if she regularly reads “The Magic School Bus” series to her students, she said,” Yes, the class really seems to like these books. I read one of these books at least 5-6 times a week during our afternoon ‘circle time.’ During ‘circle time,’ the class votes on 3 books for me to read aloud.”

“I noticed that the boys really seem to like these books, probably because they tell an adventurous story and also include interesting facts about science and nature.”

I asked Ms. Smith how many books in the series she had in her classroom library. She has 30 “Magic School Bus” books. This is the largest series of books she has in her classroom.

Ms. Smith also said she wished that they made “Magic School Bus” books at a level that kindergarten students could read them independently. “These books really are more at a 1st grade reading level. My students can’t read them on their own, “ she said.

**Concluding thoughts:**

Ms. Smith was a very helpful source. I learned that in her classroom, she regularly reads aloud “The Magic School Bus” books to her students, and her students seem to really like these books because they request them every week. I thought it was interesting that Ms. Smith seemed to think the boys were especially interested in the books. I wonder if this is the case in other classrooms. It would be interesting to do further research and learn whether these books are more popular with male or female students in general.

I also thought it was interesting that Ms. Smith said the students were really interested in the science facts these books contain. Now I’m interested in learning more about how the books are actually written. What kind of research goes into writing these books? How much of the stories are “true?” And how much of the stories are “fiction?”

**Sample Exibit B: Online Source: Website**

**Source Information:**

Scholastic. “How the Magic School Bus Books Come Alive.” The Magic School Bus. Web. 9 February 2011. http://www.scholastic.com/magicschoolbus/books/process.htm

**Summary of Source:**

I decided to visit The Magic School Bus website, which is created by Scholastic, the company that publishes this series of books. On this website, I found an interesting page called, “How The Magic School Bus Books Come Alive.” This page explains the creative and research processes the author and illustrator go through every time they write a new book.

**Interesting quotes/facts:**

I thought it was interesting that the books’ author, Joanna Cole, does conduct research to obtain the scientific facts and information for each picture book. According to this site, “Cole does extensive reading, visits museums, and talks with experts” (Scholastic). The books are not just full of facts, though. They also need to be entertaining to appeal to their readers – children. The site explains that “Joanna Cole finds it a challenge to convey accurate science information and tell a humorous story kids will enjoy” (Scholastic).

It was interesting that the illustrator, Bruce Degen, also puts much time and effort into the pictures he creates for these books. According to this website, his favorite part about doing these illustrations is “…making bold fashion statements with Ms. Frizzle’s weird outfits. Fans have come to enjoy the dressess, wacky shoes, and accessories” (Scholastic).

This series of books is obviously sucessful. According to Scholastic, “Two Magic School Bus titles have been named School Library Journal Best Books of the Year, and they have won countless state book awards, from New York to Nebraska.”

They have been writing Magic School Bus books for 25 years now.

**Concluding thoughts:**

I enjoyed reading the information about how these books are created on the Scholastic website. I learned that much time goes into the creation of each book, including researching the scientific facts for each story. I would not have guessed that the author traveled to different places and visited museums to gather information. These truly are educational books, not just general picture books.

On this website, the illustrator talks about Ms. Frizzle’s wacky outfits. In my report, I plan to analyze one of her outfits. I will describe her dress, shoes and accessories and analyze how the illustrators’ choice of color and images relates to the scientific theme of the story.